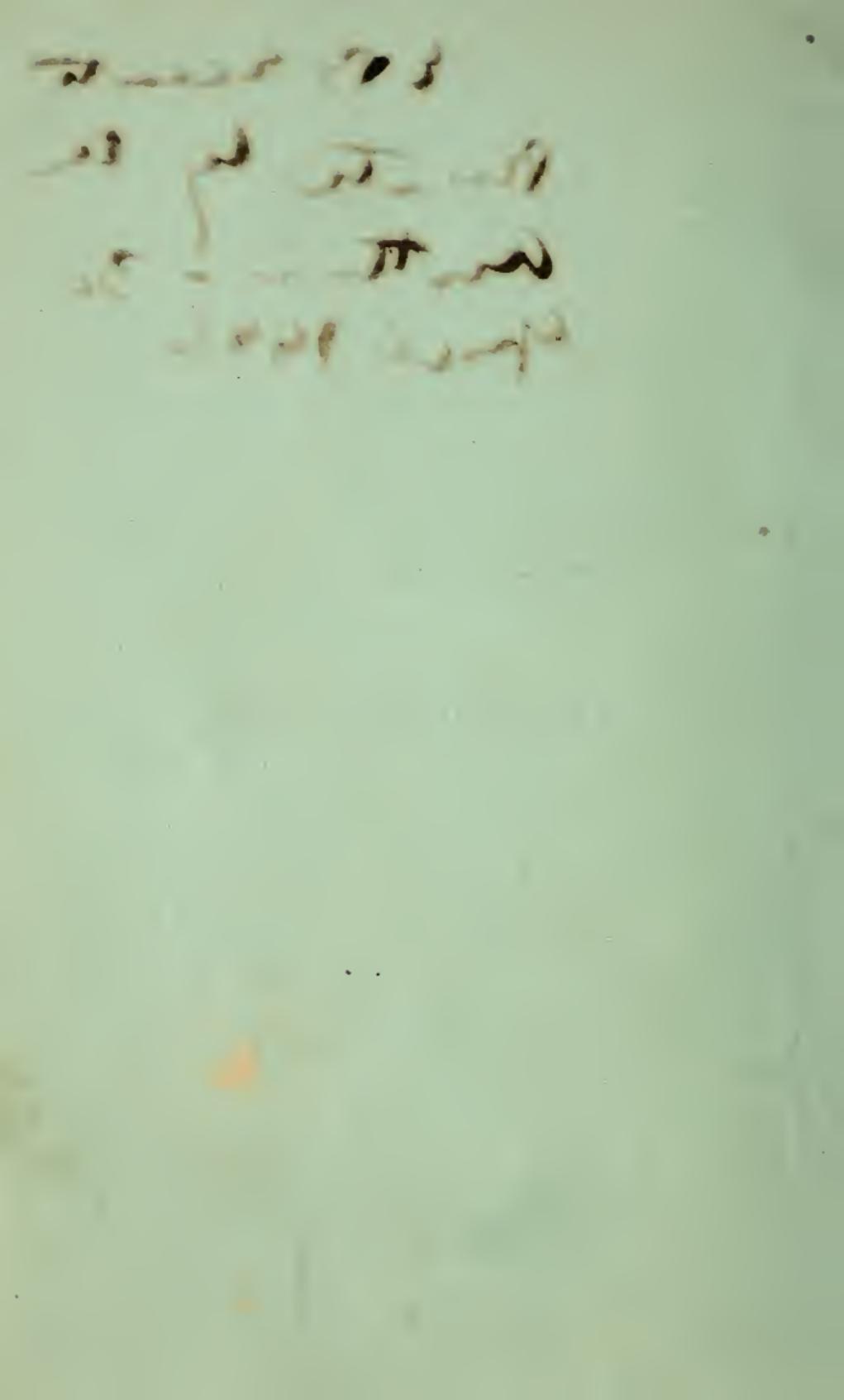


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# SMOKE.



# S M O K E :

A POEM DELIVERED AT THE MEETING OF THE

NEW YORK STATE PRESS ASSOCIATION,

AT

Oswego, June 7, 1876.

By Ausburn Towner.

ELMIRA, N. Y.  
ADVERTISER ASSOCIATION, PRINTERS.  
1876.

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## S M O K E .

The hurrying months have gathered up the days,  
Filling the measure of another year,  
And meeting once again from various ways,  
    You find sweet welcome with your brethren here.  
Once more united, neighbor, brother, friend,  
Congenial thoughts, companionship attend,  
Your cares or disagreements left behind,  
To all, save present gladness, you are blind.  
If clouds, harsh fate above your pathway throws,  
Here, only their bright, sunny lining shows.  
With hearts unlocked, and busy tongues unbound,  
The ancient joke and hearty laugh go round,  
The past comes up colored in brightest rays,  
Or shots prophetic are fired at future days.

Some, since this genial conclave first was known,  
Have, year by year, to closer friendship grown,  
Have watched each other, with a kindly grace,  
Grow rich in honors, with increasing days.

Some, their labors ended, their voices stilled,  
Their places vacant, never to be filled,  
Have fall'n asleep, touched by the Father's hand,  
To wake with new life in th' eternal land.

Still others with this goodly throng engage  
A younger generation on life's stage,

Who, wisely joined, with each recurring year,  
 Gain, from your words, new helps in their career ;  
 With eager sight, scanning what you have done,  
 Push on the work, which is so well begun,  
 With higher motives ever in their view,  
 As yours surpass those which preceded you.

- A mighty thing is this we call the Press,  
 Its frown portends disgrace ; its smile, success.  
 Into its ear, with never ceasing tone,  
 From nearest hamlet or from farth'rest zone,  
 Is poured a record that embraces all—  
 An empire risen ; almost a sparrow's fall.  
 With this great engine thundering in advance,  
 'Twould seem that all of Nature's ways were man's.  
 That chance nor skill nor energy could give  
 Aught else worth thought, save God's prerogative.

Bethink you for a moment. See how vain  
 The proudest progress made. How small the gain.  
 See what a veil is that which still o'erspreads  
 The unwrought path, along which mankind treads.  
 Its folds mysterious, cloud a nation's way,  
 And circumscribe the path of man each day.  
 Deep in its midst, we say we live ! We grope  
 With outstretched hands, without a guide, save Hope.  
 Whatever or wherever we may be,  
 We're only certain of uncertainty.  
 The chiefest lesson it, that's learned by men,  
 How little here, how much beyond our ken.  
 It wraps with quickening haste in closest screen  
 Whatever passes, everything that's been,  
 As though Earth, fearful of a sure disgrace,  
 Just blushed her history and concealed her face.

Six thousand years have gathered up their strands,  
 And wove the centuries with rapid hands.  
 Six thousand years of that unceasing flight  
 Since naught was something and darkness light,

Yet only back a century or two,  
 And rising mists obscure our anxious view,  
 A moment's time of memory's caress,  
 To lengthened ages of forgetfulness.

See in our tropics, where the trade wind sways  
 The purple lucerne and the fruitful maize,  
 By temperate slope and on the torrid plain,  
 The rotting ruins of a race remain.  
 What various splendors marked that people's course !  
 What wealth of beauty ! What extent of force !  
 What flowers fair wisdom scattered in their way,  
 That bloom so brilliant even in decay ;  
 Imagination strays, with soul all won,  
 Where glorious trod these children of the Sun,  
 Peoples once more the city's large domain,  
 Or fills with life the now deserted plain.  
 What pages with interest gleaming all about,  
 Have rolling years completely blotted out !  
 Mayhap their annals chant as proud a hymn  
 As vaunted Rome can thunder—Athens sing ;  
 Yet not by mortal man shall e'er be penned,  
 Their unknown origin or shadowy end.  
 Pale mystery hangs her hazy mantle there.  
 An epitaph their history :—“ Once they were ”—  
 Useless their fate, our ignorance to deplore,  
 Vain all our sighs—They were—we know no more.

And still much further, over well reaped fields  
 The harvest won, of truth, small measure yields.  
 Prejudice and tradition blur the page,  
 And Fable swings her censer o'er the age.  
 Nations we thought we knew, with each decade  
 Appear in garments new and strange arrayed.  
 And men, whose places in th' immortal roll  
 Seemed fixed as firmly as is either pole,  
 Vanish forever, save from fiction's sight,  
 Or show new features in the modern light.

Thus, Nero, cruel, murderous, and cold,  
 Is found to be a very gentle soul ;  
 And Borgia, with kinsmen's blood imbued,  
 Is but, to say the least, misunderstood ;  
 And William Tell is gone, his boy and bow  
 Vanish, amid the gleam of Norway snow ;  
 England's Harry, with all his Mormon mood,  
 Is but wife-martyred for his country's good ;  
 And Pocahontas, gentlest of Indian girls,  
 In clothing scant skips off with maddest whirls.  
 Alas, not men alone this probing feel,  
 Or dwindle underneath the searching steel ;  
 The Man of Nazareth stands before their rod,  
 A modern copy of a Hindu God !

But why the Past invade, the Future scan,  
 When Present hours, which we've no power to hold,  
 Slipping like quicksilver from firm clasped hand,  
 No surer or more certain things enfold ?

What narrow belts, where everything seems clear,  
 Map out our knowledge of our little sphere.  
 From coasts tempestuous, where we dread to land,  
 High mountains rise and continents expand.  
 Majestic streams through fertile valleys glide  
 Whose source unknown, mysterious regions hide.  
 Here ; tropic air, all reeking ripe with death,  
 Drives back th' explorer with its tainted breath.  
 There ; ice-locked oceans and eternal snow  
 Fix barriers stern, beyond which none may go.

The simple rustic, trained from humble birth,  
 With hoe and plow to wrestle with the earth,  
 Whose mind scarce raised above the clod he digs,  
 To be intent on poultry, stock and pigs,  
 Whose learning sparse enables him to spell  
 With up-hill groans, through tales he loves so well,  
 Or whole week's work to carve, with many a sigh,  
 On smooth barked tree, a name that he swears by ;

Whose aim, when young, is sighted by desires,  
 When old, controlled by what his stock requires,—  
 What misty prison holds his little sense,  
 And bounds him farmlike by his neighbor's fence!  
 Towards Eternity, dotted here and there  
 With ships, that freight, to man's best wishes bear,  
 The stream of Time forever swiftly flows.  
 He heeds it not, its presence never knows.  
 Thinking of naught save self, and how self fares,  
 He is—'tis all he knows—'tis all he cares.

The pondrous rich man, with depth of purse untold,  
 In all his sleek pomposity of gold,  
 His creed, much narrower than all others is,  
 Runs trippingly along like unto this:

Oh! is n't this world a queer old world—  
 Its oddities who will rehearse?  
 Brains are but little. Hearts all a farce.  
 There's not much outside of a purse.

We believe in the Purse ! Let poets sing  
 Of love the whole day long;  
 You'll find this world, this practical world,  
 Simply reads the poet's song.  
 'T will bury its heart if the shrine's only gold,  
 And even the poet's curse  
 On the glittering dross will turn to a prayer  
 At the sight of a plethoric purse.

We believe in the Purse ! Let Christians teach,  
 That to love it is a grievous fault—  
 You'll find this world, this pious old world,  
 Has a creed that would screen a vault.  
 And the golden rule is the rule of gold,  
 To many churchmen, and what is worse,  
 Their Hell is only a moneyless hole—  
 Their Heaven, a magnified purse.

We believe in the Purse! Let the heart hold back,  
 Lest its gleam may reflect a crime,  
 You'll find this world, this jury of a world,  
 Has a theory more sublime.  
 It applies a part of a Natural law  
 That governs our Universe;  
 And lo! crime varies on a limitless scale  
 Inversely as the length of the purse.

We believe in the Purse! Let others ask  
 For glory and a noble name—  
 That when they die a mourning world  
 Shall re-echo with their fame.  
 What a mocking wish! We cannot see  
 Though a world weep after our hearse.  
 Better, far better than this, we ask,  
 While we live, a great, plump purse.

A goodly thing is gold; with equal hands  
 It cheers the widow's path and rules all lands.  
 Satire has laid his brittle lance in rest,  
 And seen it shattered on the yellow breast,  
 Since it alone no just satire deserves,  
 But he, who all its basest uses serves.  
 Such, hugging close, the soul's most grievous hurt,  
 Lifts not his eyes from contemplating dirt!  
 The rustic's blindness, forced by fate's decree,  
 Is clear to his, who can, but will not, see.

The wise man, learned with dextrous mind to trace  
 Unaltered nature through her hidden ways,  
 Who knows as readily universal laws,  
 As merest atomies, or minutest cause—  
 Sure, he, so high from vulgar gropings raised  
 Undimmed, views all things, wheresoever placed.  
 Serene surveys all secrets nature hath,  
 While envious mists cloud not his onward path!

When westward the sun has wheeled his fiery globe,  
 And night sits glorious in her starry robe—  
 When midnight hours, their solemn vigils keep,  
 And hush the day-time workers into sleep,  
 A restless watcher's eyes, from some tall tower,  
 Sweep ever o'er the skies with wondrous power ;  
 Beneath their glance, what seems to unhelped eyes,  
 Mere clouds, that foam-like flit across the skies,  
 Break from the blue that distance makes so dense,  
 And shine new worlds in clear magnificence.  
 But still beyond, where simple eyes give place  
 To nothingness, sweeping through eternal space,  
 Where even telescopic vision stops  
 Aghast ! before the veil that distance drops,  
 More mists arise and fill the horizon  
 And close the portals to the far beyond.

So the wise man, whose educated glance,  
 Of thoughtless ones, keeps ever in advance,  
 If seeking nature's secrets to exhume,  
 Or dimly lighting metaphysic's gloom,  
 Beholds profusely scattered all around,  
 Mysteries more dense, questions more profound  
 Sums up all study, contemplates all thought,  
 In every path where patient souls have wrought.  
 In that wise saying, reached by sages long ago,  
 "The more we know, the more we know we cannot know."  
 Toil as we may, how large or small our sphere,  
 The vast unknown beyond, is very near ;  
 Achieve what plane we may, by force of will,  
 There's something still beyond, above us still.

A weighty lesson, close within our reach,  
 These unexaggerated numbers teach,  
 Man's nature double, strives for different ends,  
 That, clings to earth, and this, towards Heaven tends.  
 This, spurning the clay to which it is allied,  
 Eager for purer things, dissatisfied,

Restless to achieve a loftier flight,  
Where clouds do not obscure the clearer light,  
Hastens the upward steps of man's advance  
To knowledge, from the depths of ignorance,  
And keeps the conflict ever seething hot  
Between what's fully known and what is not.

In this brave fight, whose field is everywhere,  
The Press a proud and helpful part must bear.  
You stand like beacons lit before the dawn,  
And mark with certain light how far we've gone !  
You stamp upon the age, the time, the race,  
Its life, in lines which nothing can efface ;  
What's done, what's known, you spread so far and wide,  
Neglect can not destroy nor envy hide.  
Without you, see how all the past is black !  
With you, the world can never more go back.  
In this struggle, with true and earnest hearts,  
God help us all to know and do our parts !

## PLEASANT REFLECTIONS.

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Major TOWNER'S poem, elsewhere given, honors alike its author and the Association before which it was read.—*Rochester Democrat*.

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TOWNER, of the Elmira *Advertiser*, read the poem at the Editorial Convention. It was excellent in quality, and we now know why the *Advertiser* is so excellent a paper. A good editor makes a good paper.—*Middletown Argus*.

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Among the many enjoyable features of the annual reunion of the New York State Press Association at Oswego, the other day, was a poem of rare merit by Major AUSBURN TOWNER, of the Elmira *Advertiser*.—*N. Y. Com. Adv.*

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Major AUSBURN TOWNER, or the Elmira *Advertiser*, gave the poem, which we publish this week. It entitles its author to high rank in the literary guild.—*Penn Yan Chronicle*.

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Major TOWNER, of the Elmira *Advertiser*, was the poet at the State Editorial Convention held at Oswego last week. His poem is a very creditable production, and it was handsomely delivered.—*Owego Record*.

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The poem to be read at the coming State Editorial Association, at Oswego, will be from the gifted pen of Major AUSBURN TOWNER, city editor of the Elmira *Advertiser*, and one of the most talented young journalists in the State.—*Troy Times*.

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Major AUSBURN TOWNER, of the Elmira *Advertiser*, read the annual poem. He is a man of refinement and culture, who plays with the Muse as a toy enjoyable. His production was a rare one, and received with great applause. —*Amsterdam Recorder*.

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The New York State Editorial Association met at Oswego on Wednesday. Major AUSBURN TOWNER, the accomplished city editor of the Elmira *Advertiser*, read the annual poem, which is spoken of as an effort rare in conception, gracefully pointed and eloquently delivered.—*Pittston, Pa., Comet*.

Every available seat was occupied to listen to the annual address and poem, the latter by Mr. AUSBURN TOWNER, of the Elmira *Advertiser*. The best praise we can bestow on these efforts will be to publish them at our earliest opportunity, which we intend to do.—*Prattsburg News*.

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The annual poem was by AUSBURN TOWNER, Esq., of the Elmira *Advertiser*. It was received with hearty tokens of approbation, and was worthy of all the praise bestowed. We regret that we have not at present, space to give it to our readers.—*Chenango Telegraph*.

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One of the best things written in many a day, is the poem of Major AUSBURN TOWNER, of the Elmira *Advertiser*, read before the Press Association, at Oswego last week. We regret we have not room to give it entire.—*Horseheads Free Press*.

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The annual poem was the work of the graceful and easy pen of Maj. AUSBURN TOWNER, of the Elmira *Advertiser*. It was rich in solid thought and pretty sentiment, and closed with a very rhythmic invocation to the fraternity.—*Troy Times*.

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Wednesday evening a large audience gathered at the Oswego Academy of Music, to listen to the annual address and poem. The poem was a complete success, and the poet, Major AUSBURN TOWNER, of the Elmira *Advertiser*, received his full share of well deserved applause.—*Hammondsport Herald*.

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AUSBURN TOWNER'S poem, read before the recent session of the New York State Press Association, at Oswego, is a superior production. Mr. TOWNER is the very capable city editor of the Elmira *Advertiser*, and is destined soon to rank high in the literary world. Please send us an extra copy.—*Mansfield, Pa., Advertiser*.

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The last shall be first, and the first shall be last, so was it we would say of AUSBURN TOWNER, Esq., of Elmira, N. Y., whose original poem, delivered in person, was beautiful in its conception and subject, add to which was the easy and graceful delivery; made it as a whole the fitting event and closing epilogue of the evening.—*Waverly Enterprise*.

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BOSTON, JULY 1st, 1876.

DEAR SIR: I should have thanked you before this for your kindness in sending me your poem, and the pleasant words which came with it. I do thank you at last, and am glad that one so capable of pleasing others should have been pleased with anything of mine.

I am, my dear sir, yours very truly,  
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

We are sorry that we have not room for the poem of Major AUSBURN TOWNER, a production of high merit, and which has already been extensively published. The poem was a masterly production, and was delivered in that cool, quiet, unostentatious manner, that in a "good thing," always gains the closest attention.—*Geneva Gazette*.

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Major AUSBURN TOWNER, of the Elmira *Advertiser*, delivered in a pleasing manner the annual poem. It is a fine production, containing many choice passages and felicitous expressions, and well embodying the high aspirations of the journalist of to-day. The Rich Man's Creed and the Purse, introduced incidentally, strengthens by contrast the thought running through the poem, and is replete with wholesome satire.—*Watkins Express*.

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On our fourth page will be found the poem which was read before the State Editorial Association at Oswego, on Wednesday, by Major AUSBURN TOWNER, of the Elmira *Advertiser*. It is deserving of a careful perusal, and sustains Major TOWNER'S reputation as a gentleman of first-rate literary culture. Many of the gentlemen of the Association consider the poem altogether superior to any yet read before that body.—*Binghamton Times*.

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We make the following extracts from a lengthy poem de'ivered by our friend, AUSBURN TOWNER, before the New York State Press Association at the Twentieth Annual Session, which took place in Oswego, June 7 and 8. The poem is one of the finest that has ever been delivered on such an occasion in this country, and many portions of it compare favorably in beauty and elegance with the best of Goldsmith's productions.—*Pomeroy's Democrat*.

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The State Editorial Association made a capital selection of their poet this year, in Mr. AUSBURN TOWNER, city editor of the Elmira *Advertiser*. Mr. TOWNER has made a wide reputation as an able writer, so that the honor conferred by the state society of editors naturally fell to him. His poem, of course, is the very best that has yet appeared in the proceedings of this association, and does great credit to our talented townsman.—*The Bistoury*.

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The poem of AUSBURN TOWNER, read to the Press Association at its annual meeting last month in Oswego, has in it gems of rare beauty. Opening with a brief retrospect of the year, the author approaches his theme aglow with the fervor of genius which sparkles with brilliant thought to the end. How Major TOWNER can find time to elaborate thought in measured stanza and studied rhyme, is a mystery to those who know of his busy labors on a great daily paper. His poem is as fresh as the June morning on which he bore it to his fellow editors, none of whom can know what small fragments of time were worked together in the finished production which gave in the reading such full delight.—*Husbandman*.

The poem delivered at the twentieth annual meeting of the New York State Editorial Association, held at Oswego, June 7th and 8th, by Mr. AUSBURN TOWNER, of the Elmira *Advertiser*, is a very fine production, and those who have attended these meetings in days gone by, say it is the finest they have ever had. Those who have not read it should improve the first opportunity.—*The Commercial Traveler.*

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The twentieth annual session of the New York Press Association was held in Oswego June 7th and 8th. The annual poem was written Major AUSBURN TOWNER, and was probably the best one ever delivered before that association. Its principal fault is, as usual, its great length. Maj. TOWNER is city editor of the Elmira *Advertiser*, the best paper in that part of the State, and we were pretty certain that his poem would be equal to his prose productions—merit enough for one occasion.—*Port Jervis Gazette.*

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The N. Y. State Press Association had a very pleasant annual meeting at Oswego, as is evident from the concurrent testimony of the editors present. The poem by AUSBURN TOWNER, the city editor of the Elmira *Advertiser*, was a fine production and was much praised. But for its length we should have been glad to have published it. The versification is easy, the thoughts impressive, and the descriptive portion apt and interesting. It does the author much credit as a literary production.—*Corning Journal.*

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Major TOWNER's poem, delivered before the State Press Association at Oswego last week, was a grand success—both in delivery and merit. He is certainly adding laurels to his name in the literary world. It is complimented by the press everywhere, and we give it place in our columns so that our readers can slap their hands too. It lays over all previous efforts, and really places our friend's name in the catalogue with standard poets. Onward and upward is the motto.—*Waverly Enterprise.*

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We print this week the poem of AUSBURN TOWNER, Esq., of the Elmira *Advertiser*, read before the New York State Press Association, at its annual session in Oswego last week. We trust no one will fail to give it a careful reading. As a poem it takes rank among the best productions of the age, and is decidedly superior to anything heretofore read before the Association. Mr. TOWNER must at once take his place as an American Poet.—*Waverly Advocate.*

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For some reason we did not receive, until a day or two since, a copy of the proceedings of the recent meeting of the State Press Association, containing the poem by Mr. AUSBURN TOWNER, city editor of the Elmira *Advertiser*. It is not too late, however, for the expression of a word of cordial appreciation of Mr. TOWNER's creditable performance. The production is distinguished for the lofty nature of its ideas and the graceful manner in which they are expressed, and must have been one of the most pleasant features of the literary portion of the proceedings of the reunion.—*Jamestown Democrat.*

The poem read by AUSBURN TOWNER, of the *Advertiser*, before the State Press Association, at Oswego to-day, is published elsewhere in this issue. It will be worth careful perusal, and all who read it cannot fail to appreciate its merits. Major TOWNER enjoys a high reputation as a gentleman of fine literary culture, and this poem adds new laurels of literary honor. The poem is superior to any yet read before the State Press Association, and will do much in increasing Mr. TOWNER's already fine reputation. It will be eagerly read by the people here.—*Elmira Gazette*.

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We discover now and then in the periodical literature of the metropolis, literary productions emanating from the pen of Mr. AUSBURN TOWNER, city editor of the Elmira *Advertiser*. We are glad to note that Mr. TOWNER'S talent as an easy, graceful writer is recognized and acknowledged abroad as well as at home. The descriptive letter press in the number of the *Daily Graphic*, in which Elmira was illustrated, was written by him, at the request of the editors of that journal, as was also a very entertainingly written sketch of Eldridge Park, for the *Christian Weekly*. Mr. TOWNER is also a frequent contributor to other periodicals, in all of which he exhibits an originality of style that is very attractive and pleasing.—*Jamestown Journal*.

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Major AUSBURN TOWNER, of Elmira, read the annual poem. The Major's production was one of the finest to which we have ever had the pleasure of listening. It held the close attention of the audience throughout by its vigorous thought and graceful rhythm, and was pronounced by some who were conversant with Editorial Conventions for many years, to be the best ever read before the Association. The Major is to be congratulated upon the large success which he achieved. We could wish the Association no better fortune than that it might secure for its poet at succeeding meetings, as genial a gentleman, as fine a scholar and graceful a writer as Mr. TOWNER. It would give us pleasure to publish his production in full, as we see that many of our exchanges are doing, but in the crowded state of our columns this week it is impossible.—*Cortland Standard*.

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Major AUSBURN TOWNER, the gifted and genial city editor of the Elmira *Daily Advertiser*, delivered the annual poem before New York Press Association at Oswego recently. It abounds with many rich gems of thought, well worthy of preservation. As we do not find room for it at length, a few choice extracts, we feel assured, will be relished by our readers. Of the veil which overspreads the path along which man treads, we have this beautiful allusion: \* \* \* The ancient race, probably the Aztecs, once peopling this continent, receives this: \* \* \* The limit to man's researches and explorations after knowledge receives this beautiful stanza: \* \* \* This pen painting of the unaspiring plodder will be distinctly recognized, and tells the whole story in a few well wrought lines: \* \* \* The limitless beyond receives this limning from the poet's pen, \* \* \* We will close our extracts from this fine production with this, next to the closing stanza: \* \* \* —*Havana Journal*.





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